



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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Inflammatory Breast Cancer Awareness Month Observed in North Dakota To Raise Awareness About an Aggressive and Unusual Form of Breast Cancer

BISMARCK, N.D. – Governor Jack Dalrymple has proclaimed October as Inflammatory Breast Cancer Awareness Month in North Dakota.

The American Cancer Society estimates that 232,340 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013. Among these, 1 percent to 3 percent will be diagnosed with a far more aggressive form – inflammatory breast cancer (IBC).

Because the symptoms of IBC are so different from other forms of breast cancer, accurate diagnosis and timely treatment essential to survival often are delayed. IBC does not present with a lump, but with a red rash that often is mistaken for mastitis or other skin conditions. IBC usually grows in “nests” or “sheets,” rather than a tumor that causes a lump. Some women also experience thickening of the skin, pain and itching. As the cancer grows, it can result in dimpling of the skin, a condition called “peau d’orange.”

With the introduction of systemic chemotherapy, the five-year overall survival rate with a diagnosis of IBC has improved from 0 percent to 5 percent in the 1990s to a five-year survival rate of 40 percent and a 10-year survival rate of 35 percent today. With the advancements in targeted therapy, many women with IBC are now living longer with a better quality of life.

IBC tends to be more aggressive (it grows and spreads much more quickly) than more common types of breast cancer. By definition, it is never found at an early stage. It is always at least stage IIIB (locally advanced) when it is first diagnosed because the breast cancer cells have grown into the skin. Often, though, it has already spread to distant parts of the body when it is diagnosed, making it stage IV (metastatic). The advanced stage of IBC, along with the tendency to grow and spread quickly, makes it harder to treat successfully than most other types of breast cancer. This is why it is very important that women recognize the signs and symptoms of the disease.

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Symptoms of inflammatory breast cancer include:

- A breast that appears discolored (red, purple, pink or bruised).
- A tender, firm and enlarged breast (sometimes overnight).
- A warm feeling in the breast (or may feel hot/warm to the touch).
- Persistent itching of the breast (not relieved with cream or salve).
- Shooting or stabbing pain.
- Ridged or dimpled skin texture, similar to an orange peel.
- Thickened areas of breast tissue.
- Enlarged lymph nodes under the arm, and/or above or below the collarbone.
- Flattening or retraction of the nipple.
- Swollen or crusted skin on the nipple.
- Change in color of the skin around the nipple.

Tenderness, redness, warmth and itching are also common symptoms of a breast infection or inflammation (such as mastitis). Because these conditions are much more common than IBC, a doctor might at first suspect infection as a cause and treat with antibiotics. This may be a good first step, but if the symptoms do not get better in 7 to 10 days, tests to look for cancer should be done.

More information about inflammatory breast cancer can be found by visiting www.eraseibc.com. For more information about Inflammatory Breast Cancer Awareness Month, contact Barbara Steiner, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2389.

Please note: Proclamation follows on next page.

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PROCLAMATION
INFLAMMATORY BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH
OCTOBER 2013

WHEREAS, Inflammatory Breast Cancer (IBC) is a type of breast cancer in which the cancer cells block the lymph vessels in the skin of the breast causing the breast to feel warm, shooting pain or persistent itching and appear swollen, red or inflamed, and symptoms may appear virtually overnight; and

WHEREAS, symptoms of IBC can mimic those of mastitis, a benign breast infection, resulting in misdiagnoses of IBC cases, and as a consequence, the delay of appropriate care often means a Stage IV diagnosis; and

WHEREAS, IBC accounts for only 1 to 5 percent of all breast cancer cases, but is considered the most aggressive form because IBC has a faster doubling time than other breast cancers; statistically, the 5-year median survival rate is approximately 40 percent (compared to about 87 percent for all breast cancers combined), mainly due to delays in diagnosis and resistance to treatment with standard chemotherapy drugs; and

WHEREAS, IBC usually grows in nests or sheets and can quickly spread throughout the breast without forming a lump that can be detected by self-examinations, mammograms or ultrasounds; and

WHEREAS, the treatment for IBC is different from other breast cancer treatments, so it is important for women to immediately see a physician with experience in treating this particular type of breast cancer; and

WHEREAS, it is important to increase awareness and educate the public and the medical community about IBC and to continue the fight against this devastating disease.

NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim October 2013, **INFLAMMATORY BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH** in the state of North Dakota.

Jack Dalrymple
Governor